The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

VOL. V. No. 5. JULY, 1897. ONE PENNY.

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The Lilies of the Field.

See the lilies of the field
How they bloom in glory:
Say, who bade them fragrance yield,
Telling their sweet story?
Who it is that made them fair,
And sustains them by his care,
Trustfully up-gazing?

God the Lord hath bid them shine,
Decking earth with beauty,
Witnessing of love divine,
Teaching man his duty,—
Bidding tried hearts suffer long,
Doubting hearts in faith be strong,
Like heaven's flowers up-gazing.

Rise, my soul, o'er coward fear,
Cast on Him thy sorrow,
Who from winter's slumber drear
Wakes the bright spring morrow;
He who doth the lilies tend
Is thy Father too, and Friend:
Praise him, upward gazing!

From the German. E. E. W.

It is said we shall all pass away as a tale that is told. That sounds all right; but tales that are told don't pass away; they are forever being re-told again.

The thing which makes one man greater than another, the quality by which we ought to measure greatness, is a man's capacity for loving.

The Story of the Fall.

A SERMON BY THE

REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

GENESIS iii., 1.—"*Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*"

Literal, allegorical, mythical—these are the three names under which are classed the varied explanations of this and the previous chapters of Genesis. Of the first there is little to be said. I suppose there are not many in any London congregation who still believe in literal trees, with fruits which worked a physical or a moral change, in a literal serpent who spoke, or in a visible choir of Cherubim with swords of flame. The whole of the literal interpretation has fallen to pieces.

The allegorical interpretation of the chapter implies that the author intended it as an allegory. But the extreme simplicity of the narrative—evidently written in good faith—is against this hypothesis.

There remains, then, the mythical interpretation. The myth is a story—either narrated as history, or presented as a philosophical or

poetical account—which has grown up gradually around certain existing facts or certain opinions, the *unconscious* object of which story is to account for the facts or to explain the opinions. I emphasize the word unconscious, because that is a main element in the idea of the myth—the historical myth taking form from the floating traditions and feelings of the nation, like a crystal accreting to itself new layers of quartz day by day, no man seeing the process or able to observe it; the philosophical or poetical myth in the same way taking unconsciously its form from the crystallization round subjects of philosophic or religious thought of the various opinions and feelings of men. This unconsciousness of the myth entirely removes from the last editor of it—or, indeed, from any person who puts it forward—the reproach of representing falsehood as truth. It is believed to be a true account or a true explanation. If we believe, for example, that the story of the fall is mythical, we are not on that account to be accused of making the author wilfully untrue. Those who say so, have never understood the meaning of the term—*Myth*, as used now by critical writers.

I believe that the original myth, on which this story was built up, was an effort to explain the fact of evil in the world, both moral and physical evil. A number of floating ideas, embodied in mythical conceptions, were concentrated round the main idea of this myth, and filled it up gradually into a complete story. They were partly facts; first, the condition of women in the East, and their enforced dependence, their all but slavery to man, and the general conviction in which the Greek largely shared, that woman was at the root of all the evil which arose in the world. This was one fact which required an explanation. Again, there was the curse of labour, felt as a curse by thousands of easterns, especially those who laboured under the mighty Kings of Assyria, Chaldæa, and Egypt; the reluctance with which nature yielded up her goods to the agriculturist—agriculture being at first repugnant to a pastoral and nomade people, and afterwards, when that repugnance was overcome, a task of great difficulty from the scarcity of water. There were also two other facts, which, in the eyes of thoughtful men, would need accounting for. First, the great and apparently unmerited suffering which fell upon women in bringing children into the world—a fact which in those days when pain was considered a proof of God's anger, seemed to point to some great sin committed by woman. Secondly, the strange fact—more and more clear each day to men who mused upon human life—that the increase of knowledge was the increase of sorrow; that every spiritual advance was accompanied by greater susceptibility to spiritual pain, by greater necessity for struggle against evil. To satisfy curiosity, or to acquire experience of truth, was almost invariably followed by greater suffering and greater labour.

In addition to these facts of human life, there were existing symbols, traditionally handed down, which represented when this chapter was written certain ideas of the great human problem. How far they were allegorical originally, or arose from the naturally poetical statements of physical facts made by early peoples, we cannot here discuss. But long before this chapter was written it is plain that there existed, as symbols of spiritual ideas, certain representations, such as the garden of delight or of innocence—a peculiarly Oriental conception, in which the soul of man represented its feeling that it was derived from a pure source, and its passionate longing (born of a felt degradation) for peace and purity again. Within this garden conception was necessarily held that of the rivers, which appear in almost every Oriental nation; Eden was the source of all the waters of the earth, and water itself in all Oriental minds was connected with the thought of fresh and innocent life, and of the reparation and refreshment of an impure and outwearied soul. Again, within the garden was the tree of life, which embodied in one symbol the longing after immortality, which is found in almost every eastern mythology, and the tree of wisdom, which is in many of these mythologies identical with the tree of life.

Lastly, there was the serpent. From the earliest time these creatures had exercised a curious influence over the minds of men, not only in Semitic, but also in Aryan nations. They formed a special object of the study of the wise men of Egypt. Like many other symbols, they had a double and a contrasted meaning—good and evil. Their power of casting their

skin made them an emblem of immortality; they were typical of the healing power, of wisdom; and some early Christian sects in the east made the serpent, by a curious inversion, the emblem of Christ as the incarnate wisdom. But generally in Hebrew and other Oriental writings the serpent is the type of evil. Its venom, the natural horror with which men shrank from it, its subtlety, all contributed to this; and there is no doubt from the many traces we find of this hatred or fear of the serpent in other nations than the Hebrew that from the earliest times the deep sense of an evil in the world took a symbolical form to men in the serpent.

These were the elements out of which the story grew up into a quasi-historical form; and which it was intended to explain; the main idea of the myth being to account for the presence of moral and physical evil in the world.

This story, then, already existing—for we find traces of it in many nations—was adopted by the writer of this account of the fall, and taken in turn by the compiler of Genesis, whoever he was, and expanded by him. That editor, being a believing Jew, gave to the story its religious form. He knew nothing of its uuhistorical character, and most likely believed it to be true, but he certainly modified it in certain places—where it was immoral, for example, or where it conflicted with his doctrine of the unity of God—or added to it certain spiritual truths which he had conceived within himself, or which, I should prefer to say, God had inspired into his soul, clothing them, however, in poetic form. Under this simple form, which did not relate accurate history or scientific facts which the men of that time could not understand, but which suggested ideas, and insensibly instilled spiritual truth, certain universal truths of human nature are represented—concerning sin and righteousness, God and Man, the beginning of evil in the human heart, and the method in which evil is conquered; and the way in which these truths are here represented, shews an insight into human nature more wonderful, than in all other ancient writings.

Leaving aside, then, all the mythical clothing of the story, our business is to search for and to find in that account that which is human, universal, and spiritual, and to dwell on that. In that region we shall find inspiration.

The first thing to be derived from the text is a truth about evil. Its worst characteristic as a tempter is its subtlety. "Now the serpent (evil) was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." The original word, "subtle," has both the good and the bad meaning attached to it, but it is plain from the sequence of the story that evil subtlety is meant —"The serpent beguiled me."

It is a strange characteristic to put forward so prominently, and yet it goes to the root. The essence of goodness is straightness, righteousness, going the shortest way possible to the end. It declares its laws in the simplest and most direct manner—"This is right, this is wrong, this is darkness, this is light." One does not get to goodness through the labyrinth of casuistry, but by walking straighforward in the path of Duty. The subtle-minded man is rarely the true man. I do not speak of intellectual or imaginative subtlety applied to subjects strictly of the intellect, as metaphysic or science. There, subtlety is useful, if it determine to exercise its power only on clear facts seen in a dry light. But even in intellectual matters, subtlety—when it is not forced to act in a dry light and on facts—leads to the absurdities of a scholastic philosophy, and to that ideal manner of considering Nature, which, retarding for years advance in physical truth, was attacked and overthrown by Bacon.

But in the region of morality subtlety is almost always an element of evil. It refines away the broad distinctions of right and wrong; it considers a thousand objections and a thousand modifications—till our conscience becomes confused. The Jesuit writers spent a very wealth of subtlety on casuistry, and we know in what abuses it ended, and what principles it propagated. The sphere of casuistry is interesting to the intellect, it is perilous for the conscience. You will meet the serpent there, with his winning voice and varied colour. You are not safe a moment when you begin to argue upon right and wrong, to modify, to smooth away objections. The instant you let loose this principle—whatever *you* feel to be wrong to do is wrong for *you* to do, no matter if all the rest of the world thought it right, no matter if it really was not

wrong in itself, but only felt to be wrong by you; or to put it in St. Paul's words—Whatsoever is not of faith (that is, done in the full belief that it is right) is sin—the instant you lose that anchor of morality, you are getting into the region of the serpent, into the subtle tortuousness of thought which is the first step to evil, because it is the first injury done to the sensitiveness of conscience.

These things seem true of subtlety by itself in moral matters. But when subtlety exists with an evil will to back it, and becomes evil cunning, it is the very devil-nature. Its natural function is temptation; its pleasure is the ensnaring of the innocent. It likes the interest, the excitement, the cruel amusement, the self-satisfaction in its cleverness, which comes with the entrapping of the guiltless. It is as natural for a subtle mind directed by an evil will to hunt down into evil the innocent, as it is for a wild beast to ensnare its prey. Subtlety combined with evil is first beguiling and then cruel. Who does not know the cruelty which almost necessarily follows the possession of a victim?

Stupid evil is not dangerous, we despise it. Coarse evil is not dangerous, we are offended by it. Downright open-hearted evil is not dangerous, we see our enemy and are ready to resist him. But the evil which glides into our presence, pleases us with its beautiful colours, fixes us with his fascinating eye, and whispers in our ear—"Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of the tree of knowledge, lest ye die. Is it possible He has said that? He, the God of Love!" Beware of that—there is the venom of the serpent.

"Is it possible God has forbidden that?" "Yes," is the answer, and He has said that death is the penalty! "Death"—replies the serpent—"nothing of the kind will happen. It is only jealousy on God's part; He does not wish you to be equal to Him, to know what He knows. Assert yourself; take your right."

This, in other words, is the temptation. It sounds simple enough, it is exquisitely subtle—subtle in the way in which it caresses the weakness of our nature; in the keen knowledge of our nature on which it is founded. And here we find that universality which is the essential difference of inspiration. For there is scarcely any human soul in which this experience has not been repeated. This story gives a grand sketch—in magnificent outline—of the first approaches of evil in every man.

Take a simple instance. Do you remember, long ago, when you disobeyed a commandment of your father? He had forbidden you to go into a certain room in which he lived, or to touch a book which he read. "It cannot be true that he means that," you say to yourself, "is it possible he really has forbidden me? He cannot really love me, since he forbids me to enjoy myself." While we argued thus, a second voice within us said—"It is wrong to disobey him, he is right; he has some hidden reason, and, moreover, certain punishment will follow." But the voice of conscience grew weaker and weaker, and our other passionate self began to speak—"If I do it, none will know, no punishment will follow—and it is shameful keeping me back, restricting my liberty; perhaps he does not wish me to have his enjoyments, and is jealous of my knowing what *he* knows? I suspect him; I will do this, then, and be as he is; I will assert myself—satisfy my curiosity."

Oh, how often, when the fiercer temptations of manhood assail us, and the soul becomes the battle ground of good and evil—does that childish experience repeat itself? It is no harm indulging myself in this pleasure, and pursuing after this gain, in seeking to probe to the bottom this new thing which I am told is evil, but think must be good. God does not surely want to restrict my enjoyment—to spoil my life. I shall suffer no harm and I shall add to my knowledge. I see no reason why I should refrain—no reason why I am forbidden. I want to be as a God—knowing good and evil; I suspect God wishes that I should be a slave. On the contrary, I will assert myself.

These are the two subtle thoughts against which, even till the very hour of our death, we shall have to guard. All possible evil lies hid in them—*suspicion of God, the assertion of our own self-will.* To doubt God's goodness is to lose the anchor of the soul, and to drift at once over the waves of the sea of evil. Our only safety, our only hope in this perilous world is—whatever else we may lose, to cling to the belief that there is an unchangeable Goodness which must be right, whatever darkness may enfold the soul; not to suspect that loving Being who is your

Father; not to represent him to yourself as jealous, as wishing to keep you down, as restricting you without reason. Believe in His righteousness, and life will be victorious. Suspect Him, and for the time you are the victim of the serpent.

For on suspicion of God, follows inevitably the assertion of your own will against His, and that is the beginning of evil doing, for it is the beginning of selfishness. God's Will is self-sacrifice, and His whole life is spent in giving of Himself, in forgetting Himself in all. In that He finds perfect rapture, intense and perfect life. In union with Him in this self-sacrifice is alone our life, our joy, our perfectness. That is the one pre-eminent thing taught in the life and death of Christ. In that self-giving is God's life. It is in self-giving that all spirits which flow from Him can alone live. It is the law of the life of the universe. In contradicting it, in claiming to live for yourself, for your own pleasure alone, for your own will alone, for your own curiosity alone —you contradict and separate yourself from the universal law of life, and give yourself to death. *You shall surely die.* For that is begun in you which brings with it falseness, defect, misery, and death.

Suppose you say to yourself in your home— "I will live for myself, and all here shall minister to my enjoyment!" From that moment all the sweetness and joy of home is gone. You render others miserable; you debase yourself. Love the root of joy dies within you! You are dead! It is the same in the great human Home, over which God is Father. Let the aim of your life be to assert yourself; and then all the beauty, joy, nobility, and life of human life is dead in a moment, and you yourself are dead; separated from God's life, isolated in His universe. More and more the fatal thing gains upon you! Your aims, your action, and your thoughts begin and end within the circumference of self. Is not that corruption—death? God within you tells you it is so, and the unutterable loathing and horror which comes at last, and which is the very agony of hell—the loathing of being unable to escape from your own passions; your own indulged craving of gathering all to yourself; your own thoughts moving with torturing monotony round one thing, self alone; the horror of finding yourself solitary in the world, shut up with yourself, seeing nothing but yourself—this tells you at last that on the dreadful day when you first began to assert your selfwill against the will of the personal self-sacrifice whom we call God, and against the mighty calls that come to you from your brothers in humanity to live for them—the death which now reigns in you began. It is in that all sin begins. In resolving to satisfy self-will, death, spiritual death enters into us.

Lastly. This is that death from which Christ came to set us free. This is that death which he revealed to be death in his life. This is that death which he bore the burden of and conquered on the Cross. This is that death which he abjured, denied, and slew in every action of his life. This is that death out of which, in union with him, we are destined to be borne upwards into that self-sacrifice which we find in utter communion and union with the Being of God our Father. O, to be emancipated from the curse and hurry, the meanness and the degradation of a life, which is stagnating in self, into the free life of love, which, forgetting itself, lives in the life of all Humanity, lives in the life of all the Universe, and finds, in giving all we have to give, in spending all we have to spend, not only joy, but the very ecstasy of a perennial fountain of life which, because it pours itself out for ever, receives new streams of being for ever—this, this is Redemption; this is the reparation and the denial of the sin of man, this is the deep meaning of the text—"That as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

The way to fame is like the way to heaven, through much tribulation.

A life without leisure and without pause, a life of *haste*, above all, a life of excitement, such as haste inevitably involves, a life filled so full, even if it be full of interest and toil, that we have no time to reflect where we have been and whither we intend to go, what we have done and what we plan to do, still less what is the value and the purpose and *the price* of what we have seen and done and visited, can scarcely be deemed an adequate or worthy life; and assuredly will not approve itself to us as such in those hours of enforced quiet and inaction which age or sickness brings sooner or later to us.

—W. R. Greg.

Whitherward?

(Conclusion.)

In closing the series of articles under the above title I cannot repress a considerable feeling of disappointment. It was with a profound sense of the importance of the subject, and with a corresponding effort to avoid misunderstanding, that the original article was written. Nevertheless the intention of that article has been construed in almost every possible manner except the right one. I have been understood as inviting our contributors to predict the future developments of their own religious views; as requiring that the Unitarian body should issue regular forecasts, like those of the Meteorological Office, of the probable state of its theology to-morrow; as advocating a return to discarded forms of doctrine; as repudiating the teaching of Dr. Martineau; as recommending a definite announcement of Unitarian doctrine. All of which merely serves to illustrate the enormous difficulty of making oneself understood even by the ablest minds.

These misunderstandings may be summarized by saying that almost everything which the first article put as a question has been construed as a definite statement; that what I used as illustrations have been understood as principles, and that where I suggested a choice between possible alternatives the more absurd of the two has been supposed to be my own definite position.

When one is a member of an association in which rapid changes of opinion go forward, it is always possible to study objectively the general direction in which those changes move. No democrat would be deemed foolish for writing an article on the present tendencies of democracy; such an article, if wisely written, would be a guide or a warning to all whom it concerned.

In like manner I proposed a consideration of the existing tendencies of theological movement among Unitarians. A body of thoughtful opinion on that subject would be, for many reasons, extremely valuable at the present moment. It would be quite distinct from the common, but, in my judgment, entirely futile discussion of "gains and losses" in the Unitarian denomination. It would tend to clear up a certain theological mistiness which is too common among us.

But I thought it proper to the opening article, which was to lay down a general basis for discussion, to refrain from expressing my merely personal forecast of the situation, confining myself to the statement of certain questions for wiser heads than mine to answer. This reluctance was evidently ill-judged, for every paragraph I wrote has been treated controversially.

At the same time it was necessary, in order to make the question of "Whitherward" significant, to indicate definite directions in which movement might take place. I pointed to certain large and obvious areas of (by us) little trodden ground, and asked—"Is this the ground we are likely to tread in the future?" Sin, Penitence, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, the Problem of Evil, and other matters were instanced. To this question no answer was returned by my critics, and hence the disappointment of which I spoke. But I was myself treated as having answered it, and that in the least rational manner. For the rest the whole question was thrust aside as one which could not be dealt with. Now the matters just named have to do with universal needs of the human soul, and if we are unconscious of any tendency among us towards a firmer handling of them, and cannot say whether they are likely to assume greater or lesser importance in our views of religion, it is proof to my judgment of two things: first, that we have not thought out the bearings of our own position; and second, that we are very inobservant students of the world in which we live.

Among matters to which special exception has been taken I may mention the statement in the first article that, so far as concerns the teaching of the dominant school of thought among us, the history of Christ is nothing more than a "fortunate accident." To which it was replied that Dr. Martineau's philosophy allows no place for the occurrence of "chance," and that, therefore, Christ could not be an "accident." This, of course, evades the real meaning of the statement which was that the theory of religious belief as held by the school in question would stand exactly as it does if Jesus had never lived. He stands outside that theory as a particular illustration of its truth, instead of inside it, as in the theory of Ritschl, where Christ is the centre and pivot of the religious interpretation of the world. And perhaps the discussion

of "Whitherward" would reach its highest interest in the question: "Are we tending to a view which places Christ within the theory of religion as with Ritschl, or to one which keeps him outside as with Martineau?" I put that question, but got no answer to it. Our contributors took the easier line of criticizing the form in which the question was phrased.

Next as to the statement that Dr. Martineau's position, which is now that of the majority among us, admits of no further intellectual progress. This statement, though it seems to have caused vast astonishment, has not been really denied. The answer given amounts only to the assertion that the doctrine of God as unfolded by this great teacher allows of continually deepening insight into its meaning. Which is perfectly true but not to the point. For this is not what is meant by *intellectual* progress. The same might be said with equal force, or with equal want of force, of any dogma of Catholic Theology. How often has it been claimed for the doctrine of the Trinity that the longer we hold it the deeper do we find its significance to be, and the more complete its response to the needs of the soul.

In Dr. Martineau's writings we have the most convincing exposition ever given of the revelation of God in Nature and the Human Conscience. Now it would be a real case of intellectual progress if we could pass from this by logical steps to a proof of what is perhaps the deepest instinct of modern times, viz., that there is a divine revelation in Human Society considered as an organic unit. To enable us to pass by intellectual steps from the truth of God, revealed in a perfect individual to the still higher truth of God revealed in a perfect society, would be a forward movement in thought, the immediate consequence of which would bring religion into closer touch with the actual life of the world than it has ever possessed. This is only one instance of many forms of intellectual progress which might be given, but in my judgment it constitutes the great task of the theology of the future. But I am unable to see, and I think most students of philosophy will share the inability, how this task can be performed until the doctrine of God is approached from a different side, and stated in a different manner, from that which our great teacher has adopted.

To enter further into the matter is impossible here. But the technical student of thought will perceive that the difficulty arises from the *dualistic* character of Dr. Martineau's position. Every form of dualism is a *cul de sac*. It leaves the deepest problems of all not only unsolved but insoluble.

To Dr. Martineau I am one of the many who owe more, both intellectually and otherwise, than to all other teachers. But those who teach us to think will not accuse us of ingratitude if ultimately we come to think somewhat differently from themselves.—L. P. JACKS.

Plain Talks in a Country Town about Unitarianism.

BY REV. RUDOLF DAVIS, B.A.

I.—(CONTINUED).

I suggested that there are probably now not many people who really believe that Unitarians will be damned for being Unitarians. And yet, according to the letter of their creeds, all the members of the Church of England believe it. There is what is called the Creed of St. Athanasius. Now, it is not known that there was much of the saint about Athanasius; everyone who is persecuted is not on that account a saint; and the creed was not by Athanasius; it is not his theology, we are told; nor was the creed originally probably a creed at all, but a kind of canticle. There could not very well be more mistakes about it than these but that is by the way.

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith; which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this." Then follows an unintelligible mystery; so far as we understand it, utterly untrue. Now, it is probable that the great majority of Churchmen today do not believe this creed. Certainly some clergymen will not read it in their churches, though it is difficult to know how to reconcile that fact with the 8th of the 39 Articles. And it is certain that the overwhelming majority of

mankind since Christ, and the whole of mankind before Christ, have not believed it. According to the creed in the prayer-book they shall all perish everlastingly.

It is a wrong in a nation composed of men of various forms of faith, held with equal sincerity, earnestness and honesty, and, therefore, we may be assured, with equal approval of God, that one faith should be established by law, above the others, as the national faith, and given a prestige which does not belong to it; so that many members of that church look down upon members of other churches as inferior beings simply on that account. There should be not only freedom, but equality in religious belief. We admit no superiority in any church. We claim the equality of all.

It is a wrong that any one church should be established by law, in preference to other churches. But when, in addition to this, the church which is established by law, and claims to be the national church, holds such a creed, when the law declares that such a creed as this so-called creed of St. Athanasius shall be part of the services of that section of the Christian Church called the Church of England, then it is more than a wrong. It is an insult. "Oh, we don't like it," they say, many of them, when we speak about it, "We don't believe that." But what has been done, what is being done to remove it? An association, scarcely heard of, here, and a meeting there, may suggest a change now and then. But if the church, or any large section of it, had been really in earnest, surely, surely, the creed or the damnatory clauses would have been swept into oblivion long ago.

It is a disgraceful thing and a public scandal that a church which is called the national Church of England, and which calls itself the Church of Christ, should retain such a creed; a creed which in the sweetest of Christian spirits calmly commits the majority of the nation, and the overwhelming majority of the human race, to perdition, and thereby kindles and spreads un-Christ-like thoughts and feelings, and injures man's thought of God.

As a matter of fact, I have never yet met with a Churchman who believed "Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." I have talked the matter over privately with high churchmen, broad churchmen, low churchmen, laymen, and clergymen, but I have never met with one who believed that. Some have said at first that they did believe it. But after argument, when the Unitarian case, and the case of the overwhelming majority of mankind, both before and after Christ, had been put to them as I have endeavoured to put it to you,—they have ended, as most have begun, by saying, "You will be left to the uncovenanted mercy of God." They seem to think that a very dreadful thing, Now, I want to know to what better keeping we can pray to be left than to the mercy of God, covenanted, if there be such a thing, or uncovenanted. We say no church has any special covenant with God; that the idea that God has made a special covenant (that is "a bargain," to put it in gross language), with any of His children in preference to others is a gross delusion, and as much without foundation as the idea of the children of Abraham that the Lord had made a special covenant with them, and was more a God to them than to his other human children. We say that no Church has any special and exclusive covenant with the Almighty; but assuming the claim uow being pressed so vigorously by the Anglican Catholic Church had any truth in it—assuming such a covenant to exist—I want to know what is the difference between the covenanted and the uncovenanted mercy of God. I do not know what else the covenanted mercy of God is; but I do know that what the Church calls the uncovenanted mercy of God is perfect mercy, perfect justice, perfect wisdom, perfect goodness, perfect love, and to no other keeping can man trust his soul for time and for eternity. "Uncovenanted," the Catholic Church calls this. But "covenanted" in an infinitely grander sense it is; not with one sect, family, or association of men, but with mankind. "Covenanted" by the very fact that God is God and our Father, and that men are men and his children.

And now I come to the end in a way which may probably have suggested itself to many who have followed me so far. Parallel with, hand in hand with, that great principle of Unitarianism which I have already mentioned:—"Free thought in matters of religion not only the right but the duty of every man," goes another.

"Not *what* we believe, but *how* we believe is of first importance in the sight of God and for our own better life." No special theological belief is necessary for salvation. The chief question is not, "What do we believe?" but "How are we living up to, how are we working out into every-day practical life that which we do believe?"

A man who refuses every creed may be a truer Christian than another who says he believes all the creeds of the Churches. A man who is doubtful whether there is a God at all—sad as his life, and unreasonable as his thought must seem to us, may be a truer child of God than another who says he believes every word in the Bible. Conduct is more than opinion. Opinion is very much a matter of education (for which we can individually only be held responsible in part), of accident, of opportunity. One man has opportunity which another has not to get knowledge, to see light, that change his opinions. But for our conduct we *are* responsible: that it shall be in harmony with the best opinion we have been able to form. We are not responsible if our judgments about things are not perfectly right. Very often they will not be. But we are responsible for our judgments about things being the best, the truest we can attain, and for acting up to them. In other words, character is more than creed.

That does not mean that it is quite immaterial what we believe about God and life and duty. It does matter. For a man's thought about God gradually shapes his character. If a man's thought of God is mean and ignoble, something of that thought will be reflected in his own life. If your thought of God is great and lofty, something of that thought will find its way in high principle and wide affection into your life. The truer a man's thought of God is, the nobler his life ought to be.

Still, with many people what they believe is very much a matter of circumstance, of accident. The matter of first importance is that you believe what you believe with heart and mind and strength, and that you act up to that belief. You believe that a peacemaker is a blessing in any community. Then *be* a peacemaker. You will find plenty of opportunities. You believe that the poor in spirit are a blessing to those among whom they live. Then *be* humble, reverent minded. That you can always be. You believe in the blessedness of the pure in heart. Then put away from you all impurity and unrighteousness of thought and word and deed. All who would be faithful children of God, who would be true men, must fight against these things every day. It is not a bit of good merely to admire, to thrill over the beauty of the beatitudes. We must work them out in our lives. Conduct is more than opinion. Character is more than creed.

And if at anytime you are doubtful as to what it is right to do, you can do all that the wisest and the saintliest of the earth can do. Do the best you know; that *is* the right for you; no one can do more; God knows your endeavour. In the words of the hymn we sang just now—Do the right and trust in God. Nothing more is expected of us by God. Nothing else ought to be expected of us by man. Men have too long thought that to be a Christian it is necessary to believe this hard doctrine, or that difficult creed, to perform this ceremony, or accept that rite; but nothing of the kind. Christianity, religion, is not a belief, but a life. We are Christians, we are true children of the Father in heaven, in proportion as we strive, earnestly and persistently, to fill our life with that pure and beautiful spirit of love to God and love to fellow-man, which animated the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Procrastination.

There is a standard work of English literature which, though deservedly popular with our grandfathers, has been but little read by a later generation. We allude to Young's *Night Thoughts*, a poem of sustained merit, in which the philosophic student cannot fail to find a mine of suggestiveness. If the book be new to him, he will probably smile, and be reminded of the individual, unread in Shakespeare, who, taken to see one of his plays, declared it was all made up of quotations; for such a reader will find in the *Night Thoughts* many a line, many a phrase that has taken deep root in the English language as an expressive familiar quotation. Not every one who talks of "Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

knows whence the passage is taken ; and perhaps fewer persons still credit Dr. Young with the true and pithy saying that "Procrastination is the thief of Time." Yet the line is imbedded like a gem in his poem.

How true that saying is, we rarely find appreciated by youthful minds; and yet procrastination—the putting of till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day—is one of the most fatally bad habits the young can acquire. When the thing to be done has been fully considered, and a clear decision arrived at, nothing remains but to fix on the right time for action, and if, as often happens, that right time is the "now," the wise man acts promptly, does the deed, whatever it may be, without further parley, and very often is able to throw the whole affair behind him, and so have his energies free for fresh tasks. But the procrastinator talks of "plenty of time," of by-and-by;" or, if pressed, maybe of "to-morrow" —that to-morrow which is ever a morsel of the veiled future which no human being can have any certainty about, but which is pretty sure to bring with itself its own burden of cares and duties.

It is hardly too strong an assertion to declare that no decided procrastinator was ever really successful in life. Perhaps if he belongs to the limited band of people who are independent of active employment, the habitual procrastinator may seem a comparatively harmless and inoffensive person. His affairs are so small, that we are apt to think that he cannot greatly injure others or himself; but even he sometimes frets his friends by delays and neglect and unpunctuality, which act as clogs on the social wheel; and a life that seems to have no higher purpose than to get over time, can hardly be considered a happy or successful one.

But a vast multitude of persons are so constituted, that the habit of procrastination early acquired and long continued, or its opposite, that of prompt action, will make all the difference between partial failure and real success in life. Observe, how "unlucky" the dilatory person is often considered, or at any rate considers himself; while the truth is the ill luck can five times out of six be clearly traced to his own neglect of opportunities and to his needless delays. He had a certain letter of introduction a week in his pocket, but finds on delivering it that the advantageous post he was seeking has been two days filled up. He knows that a friend whom he promised to visit for the leave-taking is about to go abroad for years ; but he puts off the little necessary excursion so long, that when at last he makes his call, he is told "Mr. So-and-so sailed yesterday ; he was expecting you all the week, and seemed sorry not to see you."

Worse still is it when the too long delayed visit is to some sick friend or relative who has pined to behold once more the long absent one. With the old or the seriously ill, it is a sad thing to wait expectantly for the beloved face and not to see it; and very terrible is the recollection of the one summoned, when his conscience tells him he has trifled with time, as he finds that he arrives at last just too late. He can find small comfort in the excuses he makes to himself: "I never thought the illness was so serious. I never thought that the end was so near."

It is impossible to read history and biography without being struck by the momentous issues which have been decided by prompt action or needless delay. It is said that the unfortunate Louis XVI. and his Queen would in all probability have escaped from France had not Marie Antoinette waited for some jewels to be packed, and so delayed the starting for that little journey which resulted in their arrest at Varennes. Who can tell how different the history of Europe might have been, had that jewel-packing been left alone !

Corporate bodies—nations even—are as apt to procrastinate as individuals, putting off the execution of measures, the expediency of which has been fully acknowledged, from time to time, till the recipients of "favours to come" are often "heart-sick" from "hope deferred." "He who gives promptly gives double," says the old Latin proverb (*Bis dat qui cito dat*), and it certainly applies to all cases in which benefits are to be conferred. The Yankee advice to be quite sure you are right, and then "go ahead," is not to be despised.

The truth is, that little unfulfilled duties are like so many stones in our path, hindering and obstructing our progress, and not seldom tripping us up. How often do we find a plan frustrated because some preliminary step, necessary to its execution, has been needlessly delayed. On the other hand, a seemingly small duty promptly

fulfilled is often like an acorn that is planted in suitable soil. We think little more about it, till one day there is a sapling before us, which will grow into a sheltering tree by-and-by. Probably duties fulfilled at the right time have always a germinating power that is at work for our benefit, and of which we shall see the results sooner or later.

We believe it was Madame de Staël who said that "No more" was the most mournful phrase in the English language; but we think that the words "Too late" are sadder still. To be too late—when it might have been otherwise—with the kind word or kind action which would have comforted the suffering; too late with the word of forgiveness that ought to have been spoken long ago; too late in acquiring useful knowledge that lay within our grasp; too late in gaining wisdom that would have saved us from a multitude of errors: what sorrow and remorse may be behind the words!

We wonder if Lord Chesterfield felt the sting of Dr. Johnson's famous letter to him. The great lexicographer had accomplished his task, though long years of penury and privation would have daunted a weaker spirit. Lord Chesterfield was called his patron; and when the Dictionary was completed and its author well known, that nobleman appeared proud of the title. It was then that Johnson wrote: "Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known and do not want it."

But though "Too late" has a mournful sound, like the plaintiveness of a minor chord, there is surely an inspiriting trumpet-note of cheerfulness in the proverb, "It is never too late to mend." It is worse than folly to let the mind fossilise in its old opinions, if these be erroneous; though there are people who do not see that changing an opion is often only tantamount to saying, "I am wiser to-day than I was yesterday." Yes, to mend what is evil as far as we can is the one thing certainly which is never "too late" to do. "For want of a nail the shoe was cast; for want of the shoe, the horse went lame; and so the race was lost."

"A stitch in time saves nine," is another homely proverb, and one that, by dint of its assonant rhyme, clings to the memory. Never should it be forgotten by those who are given to procastination. Let them couple it with "Never too late to mend," and taking both sayings to heart, begin a new system. They will probably be surprised at the happy results.

Character Lessons.

FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES.

By George H. Young.

LESSON VII.

OUR TREATMENT OF DUMB ANIMALS.

"I would not enter on my list of friends,
Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility, the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm."

Cowper.

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.—*Deut.* xxv. 4.

1. How should you think of animals?
   As having rights like myself.
2. Who gives them life?
3. How should we treat them?
   With kindness.
4. Have we right to take their lives?
   Only for food or to save ourselves from harm.
5. Have any the right to shoot game and catch fish merely for sport?
6. Why do we require labour from animals?
   Because if we treat them kindly we have a right to their service.
7. What feeling should you have toward a horse grown old in the service of your family?
8. Have you any right to cheat dumb animals, as by leading them to suppose you have food for them when you have not?
9. Are you kind to animals?
10. What is your feeling about the man who is cruel to dogs and cats, or any other animal life?
11. What sort of character must he be?
12. What advance, if any, is making, in regard to saving animals from cruelty?
13. What can you tell about any organisation for that purpose?

14. Tell what you can about John Pounds.

To the Teacher.—A good opportunity to impress the idea of the sacredness of animal life. Urge the wrong of all torture, like impaling flies on pins, cock-fighting, fox-hunting, horse-racing, &c. Be kind to lower forms of life.

LESSON VIII.

OBEDIENCE.

"O Father! help us to resign
Our hearts, our strength, our will, to thee;
Then, even lowliest work of thine
Most noble, blest, and sweet will be."

To obey is better than sacrifice.—
1 *Sam.* xv. 22.

1. How do you know what you ought to do?
By thinking carefully as to my duty.
2. Do you know what is right?
3. How are you certain about the right?
My best judgment tells me about it.
4. Have you ever done wrong?
5. Why did you do it?
6. What will aid you to do right?
Thoughtfulness, courage, prayer.
7. When does it require courage to do right?
When those about me are encouraging me to do wrong.
8. What feeling ought you to have about wrong-doing?
9. Do you feel happier when doing the right?
10. Are you quite careful enough about all this?
11. Who among your acquaintances excel in these things?
12. What names in history have impressed you in these regards?
13. Read the story of Eliot, the first missionary to the Indians in this country, and tell your impressions about him.
14. What do you think about St. Paul in relation to his faithfulness to the new light?
15. What guide can you have in these things?
16. Felicitas was a rich widow in Rome in the time of Marcus Aurelius. She trained her seven sons in the Christian faith. Publius, by threatenings and persecutions, sought to make them worship false gods, but all to no purpose. Finally all the sons were destroyed, but Felicitas remained firm and praised God for her sons' faithfulness. Finally she was beheaded. What do you think of her moral courage?
17. State the theory about the inner light held by the people called Quakers.
18. What other arguments can you urge for securing obedience to the moral law?
19. Can one be religious without such obedience?

Recite Jer. xxvi. 13; Deut. xi. 27; Acts v. 29.

To the Teacher.—Emphasize the reality of the inward monitor. Bring up illustrations from life in the home, with teachers and playmates. Show the value of godly sorrow for wrong-doing. Urge the fact of our high appreciation of good people.

Music as an Agent of Association.

Few things are more curious than the association of ideas or memories with certain sights, scents, and sounds. Undoubtedly the most powerful of these agents is sound. Who cannot recall occasions in his life when some melody, one known and loved but long forgotten, burst on the ear, carrying his soul back as by a lightning flash to the past, and dissolving the palpable and sentient present into a dim unreality. At such a moment the man who has borne blasts of adversity and frosts of fate, only to grow hardened in the process, becomes weak as a child in the presence of a power mightier than himself. He does well to be humble and reverent under its influence, for it may be the Eternal Spirit is speaking to him through the channel of association.

Mr. Holman Hunt's well-known picture of "The Awakened Conscience" is a case in point. There are only two figures in it, a man and a woman sitting in a somewhat gaudily furnished room beside a piano. His fingers are on the instrument. His face, which is reflected in a mirror, is handsome and vacant, evidently that of a man about town who supposes the brightest part of creation is intended to minister to his amusement. A music book on the floor is open at the words "Oft in the stilly night." That tune has struck some chord in his companion's heart. Her face of horror says what no language could say, "that tune has told me of other days when I was not as I am now." That tune has

done what no sermon could do. It has brought a message from a father's house.

Many and varied are the emotions awakened by music, and there is not one in the scale of feeling which does not vibrate to its touch. The following story illustrates one phase of its power. It was told by a man full of years and honours, the revered head of a beautiful English home :—

Many years before, the license of unbridled youth had banished him from his native land. Relatives and friends alike had refused further assistance, and at last the prodigal found himself at the antipodes, friendless and unknown. Lacking utterly the moral stamina necessary in such a case, he sank from bad to worse. One day, having wandered for many hours, absorbed in melancholy thought, he found himself in a scene of peculiar wildness. Giant rocks and awful chasms surrounded him, while the unbroken stillness of evening intensified the gloom of the scene. Suddenly the demon of self-slaughter entered the unhappy man ; the means were ready to hand. There, at his feet, was a lake, whose dark waters would soon close the record of a wasted life. None would learn his fate, for in that remote spot human foot seldom trod—seldom, but yet sometimes, for at that moment, sweet and clear, rang out a sound which moved the exile as all the thunders of Jove could not have done. It was a traveller, singing as he went a ballad which had been a favourite with the unhappy man in his distant home. What pen could describe the emotions it aroused at such a time ! "It changed," said the narrator of the incident, "the very current of my being ; it roused in me a passionate yearning to see my home again ; and I vowed solemnly that, please God, I would yet be worthy to return to it."

An equally forcible, though by no means so pleasing, an example of the power of association through music is afforded by the following anecdote :—A lady was present at an entertainment given by a famous amateur Club. Throughout the evening she had been remarkable, even in that brilliant assembly, for her sparkling humour and the brightness of her sallies ; but no sooner had the first bars of Haydn's famous "Surprise Symphony" been played, than she was seen to change colour ; a ghastly pallor overspread her face, while her eyes were distended as if in the extremity of fear. Greatly alarmed, her friends bore her from the room, and with some difficulty restored her from a prolonged fainting-fit. "That dreadful music—that dreadful music !" were the first words she spoke ; nor was it until long afterwards that the following explanation of her panic was given to an intimate friend.

Many years previous, she was sitting one day in a room with an elder sister, who was taking a music lesson. The piece under practice was the "Surprise Symphony," and over and over again, with tedious persistence, did the exacting master make his pupil travel through the symphony, until every note of it was indelibly fixed in the mind of the listener. As the piece was in progress for about the twentieth time, a piercing shriek was heard ; the door of the music-room was flung open, and a valued servant, who had been a mother to the sisters all their lives, staggered in, the blood flowing from a fearful wound in her side—staggered, and fell to the floor in a death-agony. She had been murdered by a foreign servant whom she had dismissed for theft, and the assassin had sprung on her from a dark recess in the corridor. Though the horror of that scene had necessarily somewhat faded with the lapse of time, it was revived in all its ghastliness for one of its witnesses when she again heard the "Surprise Symphony."

To most of us, some homely sound is fraught with power to bring back scenes of the past. I have a special fondness—which I fear is almost peculiar to myself—for the buzzing of a fly, and was delighted one early winter when a fine large pompous fellow made his home in my room, and whenever the air was warmed, would fly about with tuneful buzz. I had only to close my eyes, and, though winter and rough weather raged without, for me the sun again shone, the birds sang, myriads of insects made a concert of sweet sounds, and the indescribable essence of summer returned.

A friend of mine tells me that sometimes he forgets his mother's face. She died in his early childhood. But when he hears the old tune to the children's hymn "I think when I read that sweet story of old," his mother's face returns before him, fresh and vivid, with the love-light in her eyes. Blessed be the associations of music.

Some Recent Malapropisms.

The funniest instance in my personal recollection was the utterance of a man who, when starting on a railway journey, explained, as he replaced his hat with a soft cap, "These hard brims are so uncomfortable in case of osculation!" The remark (in spite of its obvious truth and the stony stare of a respectable spinster *vis-à-vis* to the speaker) was, I regret to say, followed by more "oscillation" on the part of some fellow passengers than was altogether due to the motion of the train.

A lady, looking at her first grandchild with pride, remarked to the old nurse: "The baby is very much like its mother, don't you think so?" "Oh, yes, ma'am," replied the nurse; "but it has something of you, too; it has always been so fussy and fidgety-like, I always said it had your temperature!"

A native of India, who was very proud of his pedigree, once brought me to his "tree," over which was written, "Geology of the house of Ali Khan, descended from the Prophet."

Said a mistress: "Things do not seem to go quite as they should do on your evenings out, cook." "No, mum, I know they don't, and it is strange, for I always give Jane the most mute directions. You've really no idea what very mute directions I gives her. I can't think why she can't follow them."

Some years ago, after a marriage in the writer's family, the maid was overheard to reply to a lady, who had called to ask if the young couple had come home—"No, ma'am, Mr. and Mrs. Blank are still on their wedding trousseau" (meaning tour).

Mr. Bounderboy: "My agent writes to say he has discovered that the building plots I bought so cheap are quite contagious to the Fever Hospital." (Doubtless the agent wrote contiguous.)

An old coachman in Norfolk had been suffering severely from sciatica. On inquiries being made one morning as to his condition, his wife appeared, and stated that she had been "a-rubbin' him all night with imprecation, but that don't 'pear to have done him much good."

The extreme severity of the weather was the theme, when Mrs. M. remarked complacently, "Yes, the barometer was below Nero last night."

Some people were discussing an accident which happened to a lady's head, and one of them said, "Didn't she have an operation performed?" to which some lady at once answered, "Oh, yes, she had her head japanned."

1. A friend to her cook. Housekeeper: "You forgot the Parmesan in that savoury, Mrs. Alexander." "No, my lady! I put it in, you may take my galantine of it." 2. The same woman said: "How lovely the gardens will be when the flowers are in full plumage!"

A Lesson of Life.

A long day's journey there lay before;
I crossed the meadow at breaking morn,
I saw the road wind by hill and moor,
And beyond the hills was my distant bourne.

I thought of the greetings I should win,—
What was it moaned at my feet meanwhile?
A poor old terrier, lame and thin;
I stooped and helped him over the stile.

Then would have crossed, but a dreary yelp
Arrested me, and I turned to view
A limping poodle whose need of help
Was manifest; and I helped him, too.

Of every nation and tribe are they;
And each has a fresh resistless wile.
Each says, in his own peculiar way,
"Please help a lame dog over a stile?"

They're Greyhound, Skye, Pomeranian,
They limp along in an endless file,
They're smooth and curly, they're black and tan,
They *all* are lame and would cross the stile.

The shadows deepen o'er hill and glen,
Dim is my pathway of many a mile;
Yet will I renew my journey when
The last lame dog is over the stile.

MAY KENDALL.

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THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

My Good Right Hand.

I fell into grief and began to complain ;
I looked for a friend, but I sought him in vain :
Companions were shy, and acquaintance were cold,
They gave me good counsel, but hoarded their gold.

" Let them go ! " I exclaimed; " I've a friend at my side
To lift me and aid me whatever betide ;
To trust to the world is to build on the sand ;—
I'll trust but in Heaven and my good right hand."

My courage revived in my fortune's despite,
And my hand was as strong as my spirit was light ;
It raised me from sorrow, it saved me from pain,
It fed me and clad me again and again.

The friends who had left me came back every one,
And darkest advisers looked bright as the sun :
I need them no more, as they all understand,—
I thank thee, I trust thee, my good RIGHT HAND.

Davie's Surgical Hint.

" Davie, I think I left my spectacles upstairs," said grandpa, after he had searched the sitting-room for his accustomed helpers.

" Oh, dear ! " began Davie, who always thought it a great nuisance to go up and down stairs unless he wanted something for himself, and could'nt get any one to go But, before he had finished his grumbling sentence, little Lillie had deposited her lapful of patchwork on the sofa, and, with a cheery, " I'll get them, grandpa," was on her way upstairs.

" Davie, you forgot to put your tools away," mamma said a little later.

" Oh, dear ! It's such a bother to put everything away ! " fretted Davie. " Can't I leave them where they are till to-morrow, for I want to use them again ? "

" No : I want them put away at once," said mamma, in such a decided tone that Davie knew she required instant obedience.

" Oh, dear ! I never can learn this long lesson ! " he grumbled that evening, when he sat down to prepare his recitation for the next day. " It's such a lot of work to translate all the sentences ! "

Dr. Morton had dropped in for a little chat with Davie's father ; and he looked up as he heard the impatient exclamation.

" What do you think I have been doing to-day, Davie ? "

" What, sir ? " asked Davie, glad of a diversion from his books.

" Breaking a little girl's arm."

" Do you mean mending it, doctor ? " asked Davie, thinking that the doctor had made a mistake.

" No : I broke it," answered the doctor. " Some time ago this little girl broke her arm ; and it was very badly set, and had been so stiff ever since that she could not use it as she wanted to. She makes lace very cleverly, and her earnings have been a great help to the family ; but. since her arm was hurt, she has not been able to work at all. We held a consultation at the hospital to-day, and decided that the only way to help the child would be to break her arm again, and reset it."

" I think I'd rather never be able to do anything than have that done ! " exclaimed Davie.

" Why, that's unfortunate ! " remarked the doctor. " I've been thinking that there is a bone about you that ought to be broken very soon, if you expect to become an active man. I've been meaning to mention it to you for some time."

Davie turned pale. He was not at all fond of bearing pain.

" Where is the bone ? " he asked, with a frightened tremour in his voice. " Will you have to break it ? "

" No : I can't very well break it for you," answered the doctor, " You can break it for yourself better than any one can break it for you. It is called the 'lazy bone.' "

" Oh, that is what you mean ! "

And he was so relieved that he smiled at the doctor's words.

" Yes, my boy, that is the bone I mean ; and it is a bone you ought to break very soon, if you ever expect to be of any use in this world. It will take a pretty determined effort to break it, for its one of the toughest ones I know anything about ; but you can break it if you make the effort. Will you try ? "

" Yes, sir, I will," promised Davie, manfully, his face flushed with mortification at the thought that he had earned a reputation for laziness.

Happiest Boy in the Kingdom.

Once there was a king who had a little boy whom he loved. He gave him beautiful rooms to live in, and pictures and toys and books. He gave him a pony to ride, and a row-boat on the lake, and servants. He provided teachers who were to give him knowledge that would make him good and great.

But, for all this, the young prince was not happy. He wore a frown wherever he went, and was always wishing for something he did not have.

At length, one day, a magician came to court. He saw the boy, and said to the king, " I can make your son happy, but you must pay me a great price for the secret."

" Well," said the king. " What you ask I will give."

So the price was paid. Then the magician took the boy into a private room. He wrote something with a white substance on a piece of paper. Next he gave the boy a candle, and told him to light it and hold it under the paper, and then see what he could read. Then he went away.

The boy did as he had been told, and the white letters turned into a beautiful blue. They formed these words, " Do a kindness to some one every day."

The prince made use of the secret, and became the happiest boy in the kingdom.

News from the Field.

MIDLAND SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION.—The annual meeting of this Association was held at the Old Meeting House, Coseley, on Saturday afternoon, May 29. The retiring president (the Rev. T. Pipe) presided, and among those present were the Revs. H. Eachus, E. W. Lummis, B.A., and Haycock (representing the North Midland Sunday School Association); Messrs. Meller (representing the Manchester Sunday School Association), A. W. Worthington, S. T. Cross, F. Taylor, W. Johnson, J. Parker, T. F. Derrington, T. V. Clark, Dean, Cherrington, Turner, S. Mould (Secretary); Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Thompson, Misses Eachus, Cross, Mould, B. McKean, Lummis, Woolrich, Grainger, and Reece, etc. Apologies were received from the Rev. J. Howard, Miss Youngerman, and Mr. Ion Pritchard.—At the business meeting in the afternoon, the Secretary (Mr. Mould) submitted the annual report, which reviewed the proceedings of the year, recorded substantial progress numerically, but with regard to finances shewed that the balance due to the Treasurer had been increased from £1 19s. 9d. to £3 2s. 1d., and this notwithstanding a reduction in the expenditure of £2 9s. 11d. The total expenditure for the year was £10 13s. 9d., while the subscriptions amounted to £5 15s. 6d. only. It had been suggested that the Association should attempt to provide a syllabus of work, or class lessons, to make Unitarian teaching systematic and pronounced. There had also been a suggestion that the Association should obtain a hymn-book for use in the schools, which could be sold at 1d. While agreeing with the suggestions, the Committee regretted that they could not see their way to incur the expense until they had a reasonable prospect of meeting their liabilities. Subjoined to the report were the reports of the Stourbridge and Birmingham Unions and of the visitors to the different schools.—In moving the adoption of the report, the Rev. E. W. Lummis acknowledged the work of the Honorary Secretary, of the large band of Sunday School teachers, and also of the visitors, and regretted that there was not a greater interest in the Association's doings. He pointed out that unless the income was increased the limited amount of work they were at present able to do would have to be curtailed.—Mr. Worthington, who seconded the resolution, thought there should not be the slightest difficulty in righting the finances. It was only a question of asking the right people—(hear, hear). If they visited some of the Birmingham chapels they could right the matter, he thought, in half-an-hour. He complimented the visitors on the candour and faithfulness of their reports, and went on to impress the importance of punctuality, and also of teachers who were unable to attend school sending substitutes to take their place. Inasmuch as religious instruction rested almost entirely now with the Sunday Schools, he urged the need of teachers preparing for their work in the classes, and pointed out that if the scholars were to grow up to be members of the congregation, it was extremely important the teachers should give them some account of Unitarian opinions, and not let the young people go into the world without being able to give a full reason for the faith that was in them—(hear, hear). Dealing with the methods of accomplishing this, he recommended one pursued by the Rev. P. Dean, at Walsall, under which the scholars sent privately questions upon which an address was subsequently given. By this method, the full interest and attention of the scholars was secured, as they were all desirous of hearing the answer to their questions. Before concluding, the speaker referred to the work which had been done at Coseley, and mentioned Mr. Eachus's connection with the different local authorities.—The Secretary mentioned, in connection with the adverse balance, that the appeals which had been issued had met with a reply which was very encouraging. Though the amount was not large, he considered that the schools outside Birmingham had responded magnificently—(hear, hear).—The Rev. Mr. Haycock expressed the good wishes of the Association he represented toward their fellow workers in the Midland Association, who, he said, were doing a very good work without making much fuss about it. He suggested the appointment of a local treasurer in every district where there was a school connected with the Association, and the printing with the annual report of the names and addresses of the secretaries and correspondents of the different schools.—The Rev. T. Pipe spoke approvingly of these suggestions.—The report was then adopted.—On the motion of the Rev. H. Eachus, seconded by Mr. Parker, a vote of thanks was then passed to the retiring officers, the Chairman briefly acknowledging the resolution.—On the motion of Mr. Cross, seconded by Mr. W. S. Watts, the following officers were appointed for the year:—President, Mr. F. Taylor; vice-presidents, the Rev. A. A. Charlesworth and Mr. E. L. Tyndall; secretary and treasurer, Mr. S. Mould; auditor, Mr. W. C. McStoker; visitors, Miss Youngerman, Mr. G. Davis, and Mr. S. C. Lawrence.—The newly-appointed President appealed for a more general interest in the work of the Association, and in the course of his remarks mentioned a proposal to follow the example of the Manchester Association by purchasing a set of slides illustrating some book published by the Association, these slides to go the round of the schools, for use in each of them. Mr. Worthington had intimated his intention of assisting them in the matter, and the Secretary informed him that the reply to the appeal for funds warranted them in taking this departure. He moved, therefore, that it be an instruction to the committee to take the matter up, and to provide lantern slides during the coming year.—Mr. Worthington seconded the resolution, and it was carried.—The Chairman gave a cordial welcome to Mr. Meller as the representative of the Manchester Association, and to Mr. Haycock as the representative of the North Midland Association.—Both gentlemen acknowledged the greeting, Mr. Meller taking the opportunity to strongly support the proposed lantern lectures.—The Rev. Thomas Pipe read an excellent paper on "What shall be the Sunday School of the future?"—The Rev. E. W. Lummis moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Pipe for his paper. In the course of his remarks he urged that the Sunday School teacher should study the art of teaching and also the character of the children.—Mr. W. H. Nightingale seconded the resolution, and urged that our work in the Sunday School must be very largely a social one.—The Chairman (Mr. Derrington) and Mr. Kimberley took part in the discussion, and the resolution was finally carried unanimously, and Mr. Pipe having briefly replied, the proceedings concluded.